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Anti-McNamara Signs Approved by Navy

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Star Special Writer

Auto bumper signs reading "Phase Out McNamara" appearing recently on cars of Federal employees at the San Diego Naval Base were ordered removed by the Navy officer in charge. The order stated that the Hatch Act prohibited political activity by Federal employees.

Discovering that the Hatch Act applied only to elective officials and not appointive officials, employees, municipal authorities and some of their congressional delegation protested. A new order was posted stating that "after mature consideration" the original order was rescinded. More protest signs are appearing daily with impunity.

The protests were the result of Defense Secretary McNamara's decision last December to phase out the ship repair activities of the naval base over a period of two years. Some 2,000 employees would be transferred or discharged and the 70 acres involved leased to private shipyards.

Bids Unsatisfactory

However, restrictions on the use of wharves and the large graving dock placed by Navy officers in the proposed lease have failed to produce satisfactory bids by private industry. To add to the confusion, an employee has filed suit claiming Mr. McNamara does not have authority to close any part of this base without approval of Congress.

This is just one small instance of the difficulties facing Mr. McNamara's effort to cut defense spending by closing surplus military bases. Decisions soon to be made on other and larger bases are expected to generate louder community howls.

A Pentagon decision last December to close the Rome Air Base in New York may ultimately affect 3,000 employees. A joint campaign to "Save Rome From the Vandals" conducted by Representatives Stratton, Democrat, and Pirnie, Republican, both of New York, over television, radio and newspapers inspired 233,000 letters of protest to the White House over a period of three weeks.

Delegation Protested

The recent order to close the outdated Watertown Army Arsenal would affect 2,200 employees and save over \$5 million yearly. The Massachusetts delegation led by Speaker McCormack and Senator Edward Kennedy formed a modern minuteman group to protest to the White House and the Pentagon.

A defense group has been studying the need and high operating costs of 11 large and valuable Navy shipyards. The 8,000 employees of the Boston Navy Yard, fearing the results, have asked the White House to "remove Mr. McNamara from his position." They also hinted that Representative O'Neill, Democrat of Massachusetts, was a key man on the powerful House Rules Committee and could hold up administration legislation.

The 12,000 employees of the Brooklyn Navy Yard are also protesting in advance by mass meetings with political leaders. Petitions expected to have 500,000 signatures are being circulated. Radio, posters and circulars are widely used to demand even more shipwork. These activities are paid for by the sale of many thousands of stamps, "Save Brooklyn Navy Yard," at \$1 each.